Blood on the wind and the tablet of destinies: intertextuality in *Anzû*, *Enūma eliš*, and *Erra and Išum*

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Abstract

Enūma eliš and *Erra and Išum* are richly intertextual poems that both make sophisticated allusions to *Anzû*. Both do so in competitive ways: *Enūma eliš* re-shapes earlier motifs towards its goal of elevating Marduk and Babylon over the gods and cities that came before them, while *Erra and Išum* uses allusions to undermine the image of Marduk that *Enūma eliš* creates. Ti'āmtu's blood carried on the wind to announce Marduk's victory, and the tablet of destinies which Ti'āmtu fastens to Qingu's chest are two well-known examples of borrowings from *Anzû* in *Enūma eliš*.. This article traces them through all three poems and shows how they are transformed in each. In the case of *Enūma eliš* the way that the poem deploys these allusions has previously been called clumsy because they stand out and do not appear to fit seamlessly into the narrative. Yet a closer analysis reveals that they have been much better integrated than is usually recognised, and their subtleties make important contributions to the programme of Marduk supplanting Ninurta. In *Erra and Išum* the chain becomes ever more complex: the motifs refer back to both their original contexts in *Anzû* as well as their occurrences in *Enūma eliš,* implying a self-conscious awareness and exploitation of techniques used by earlier poets.

Anzû, Enūma eliš, and *Erra and Išum* are three fundamentally interconnected poems.[1] As heroic narratives about warrior gods, they form a coherent group which stand in a historical relationship, each one alluding to the poems that precede it. Each tells the story of how a god gained recognition through demonstrating his might, and each is intensely

[1] The edition of *Anzû* is by Annus (2001), for *Enūma eliš* see Lambert (2013), and for *Erra and Išum* see Cagni (1969) plus Al-Rawi & Black for tablet II (1989).

competitive, using allusive techniques to establish the superiority of its protagonist over those that came before him. However, while the connections between these poems are by now well-established, they remain under-explored. This article takes two motifs as a case study to explore the detailed workings of intertextuality in these poems: the matter carried on the wind as a sign of victory,[2] and the tablet of destinies.[3] Both these motifs first appear in *Anzû,* are transformed by *Enūma eliš,* and transformed again by *Erra and Išum,* building up complex chains of allusion.

Lambert (1986) first acknowledged that *Enūma eliš* borrows elements from *Anzû* to depict Marduk as the new Ninurta, the implications of which were highlighted by Machinist: "The similarities with and modifications of the *Anzû* text...allow us to appreciate more precisely what *Enūma eliš* is about" (2005: 44). Machinist then extended the picture to include *Erra and Išum*.[4] This poem builds on and subverts the allusive patterns in *Enūma eliš,*

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[2] When Ninurta kills Anzû, his feathers float all the way to Ekur to announce the outcome of the battle to Enlil (SB *Anzû* III.22-23). After Marduk kills Ti'āmtu, similarly her blood is carried on the wind (*Enūma eliš* IV.131-2). In *Erra and Išum* it is the blood of the Babylonians that is carried away like ditch water (IV.34-5), and in Marduk's lament for Babylon the fallen city is compared to a palm tree whose leaves are carried away by the wind (*Erra and Išum* IV.40-44).

[3] In *Anzû* the tablet is snatched by Anzû in I.81-2 and used as a weapon in battle against Ninurta (II.66-7). It makes brief appearances in *Enūma eliš* at I.157 (and repetitions II.43, III.47, III.105), IV.121-2, and IV.69-70 In *Erra* it is invoked in a simile during Marduk's lament at IV.44.

[4] Prior to this, Jastrow had called Erra a Babylonian version of the Anzû story (1906: 179 n. 4), and Cooper had casually mentioned similarities in plot between *Anzû* and *Enūma eliš* as an aside (1977: 508), but neither elaborated on these observations.

which in turn had asserted itself over *Anzû*: the three poems thus form a set reflecting on each other.

Lambert was not complimentary about the way that *Enūma eliš* deployed these allusions and was followed by many,[5] but in recent years this attitude has begun to change. Articles by Machinist (2005), Katz (2011), and Seri (2014) explore the use of intertextuality in *Enūma eliš* as a mark of refinement. Karen Sonik has recently written about the tablet of destinies as an important symbol of legitimate power in the poem (2012), and Gösta Gabriel has discussed its function in relation to the determining of destinies (2014: 262-8). However, the meaning of such borrowings has yet to be fully explored, both in *Enūma eliš* itself and in Mesopotamian literature as a whole. This article takes the blood on the wind and the tablet of destinies as two examples of how much deeper into Akkadian literature an intertextual approach can take us. Not only are these motifs much better integrated than is usually recognised, but they are crucial parts of the way that *Enūma eliš* establishes Marduk as the supreme warrior god over Ninurta, adding nuances that can substantially deepen our interpretation of the poem.[6]

As for *Erra and Išum,* although the poem is acknowledged to be highly innovative,[7] studies of its intertextuality remain few. Only Machinist (2005), Cooley (2008), and Frahm (2011) have written about it specifically from this perspective. Allusions to the blood or

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[5] Mostly circulating informally rather than in print, but see e.g. Vanstiphout (1986: 225) citing an earlier expression of this view (Lambert, 1977).

[6] Cf. Katz (2011: 127).

[7] Such as in its use of extended metaphors, intricate parallelism and rich vocabulary Foster (2007: 106-109).

feathers on the wind and the tablet of destinies are brief and only small elements in this complex work. However, they are striking examples of just how complex these intertextual chains of meaning can become, and so are particularly worthy of analysis.

Intertextuality is a term with a complex history that has come to be used in many different ways.[8] At its most basic level, it refers to the reoccurrence of words, phrases, and motifs from one text to another. In literary studies, analysis of intertextuality goes beyond pointing out these reoccurrences and moves into their interpretation. That is, when we identify a connection, we must ask what it means and why it matters. Such connections need not always be significant – it is common for religious compositions in particular such as hymns and *balaĝ*s to include formulaic epithets and passages which are part of the poetic stock. However, often references are deliberately embedded in a text as literary allusions, and the educated audience is intended to recognise them as clues to the poem's interpretation. It is these kinds of allusions and meaningful recognitions that I am speaking of under the umbrella of intertextuality here.

I speak freely of intention since the enterprise of studying ancient texts inevitably attempts to understand their original meaning.[9] This need not lead us to seek out the irrevocable thoughts of an author, however. Umberto Eco coined the phrase *intentio operis*, or "intention of the work" as a bridge between the extremes of intentionalist and anti-intentionalist viewpoints (1992). John Barton, in arguing for its applicability to ancient literature, describes *intentio operis* as the notion that a text has "a sense that follows from the

[8] For a summary see Seri (2014: 89-91).

[9] See Heath (2002) for a defence of intentionalism, and Barton (2013: 11-17) for a survey and criticism of the different schools of anti-intentionalist thought.

way it is written and constructed, irrespective of what the author or authors or tradents or compilers may have had in their minds at the time" (2013: 18). Using the term "intertextuality" keeps us focused on the text itself, allowing us to seek an authentic meaning or meanings, but without leading to extremes. It recognises the limits of what is knowable and even what is necessary to know: ultimately it does not matter whether or not an author intended an allusion to be present, for if there is enough evidence in the text to support a particular interpretation the reader is justified in making it.

My approach draws on methodologies developed in Classics, a field that has a long history of analysing allusions in ancient texts and drawing out their full significance.[10] Allusion was a common and well-established poetic practice across much of the ancient world because there was a more restricted set of texts that the literati could be expected to recognise. In Mesopotamia, different libraries of the first millennium BC contain more or less the same texts, from the personal library at Sultantepe to the temple library at Sippar (Charpin, 2010: 214).[11] The process of learning to write cuneiform involved copying out

[10] See especially Pasquali (1951); Conte (1986); Barchiesi (1984); Lyne (1987) and (1994); Farrell (1991); Fowler (1997) and (2000); Hinds (1998).

[11] For example, the three important literary compositions *Lugal-e*, *Enūma eliš*, and *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* have all been found in both of these as well as in the temple library of Nabu at Nimrud and, of course, Ashurbanipal's library. Naturally there are also differences between these libraries – see Robson (2013) for an overview. Provenances for *Anzû* include Susa and Assur (Old Babylonian *Anzû*), Nineveh, Borsippa, Tarbiṣu, and Sultantepe (Standard Babylonian *Anzû*), indicating that the text was widely circulated. In two of the Sultantepe manuscripts (STT 23 and 25) the text of tablet III departs

various literary compositions, which would have familiarised the student with the literary classics. For example, *Enūma eliš*, *An-gin*$_7$, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*, and *The Babylonian Counsels of Wisdom* have all been found as first-millennium school texts (Gesche, 2000). Furthermore, literary texts with high status were fewer than we have today, and so it would have been possible to be familiar with them in great detail.

The crucial point is that when we take a close look at allusions, the texts make more sense, as lines and concepts that once seemed obscure are illuminated by their literary context. This will be demonstrated by the blood on the wind and the tablet of destinies: a superficial glance makes them appear badly integrated, but a proper comparison with the poems they come from actually tells us *more* about *Enūma eliš* and what it is trying to accomplish.

Enūma eliš is fundamentally a story about the rise of Marduk. By telling how the god of Babylon came to be the king of the whole pantheon, the poem gives the city a god worthy of its new role as a political and religious capital. We cannot be sure exactly when it was composed, but in my view Lambert's suggestion of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the late 12th century BC remains the most reasonable proposition (1964, 2013: 439-44). The poem clearly connects the rise of Marduk to the glory of Babylon, and so was probably composed at a time of national pride.[12] As Lambert points out, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I fits these circumstances well, since this was a time of nationalistic revival coinciding with the return

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quite substantially from the standard version, but the standard version was known there as well (STT 19, 21, and 22).

[12] See now Lambert (2013: 439-65) on the composition of *Enūma eliš*. A late Kassite date is also possible.

of Marduk's statue from Elam, when the city's fortunes recovered after the collapse of the Kassite dynasty.[13] In this context there is a sense of Babylon needing to prove itself: the city needs a cultural and religious justification for its new position, which is played out in *Enūma eliš* as Marduk proving himself as worthy of his status.

Enūma eliš narrates a battle against a chaos monster Ti'āmtu[14] who threatens the divine order, a victory that establishes Marduk as the supreme god. However, the *Anzû* poem already tells a similar story: how Ninurta killed Anzû and was rewarded with a high position in the pantheon. The earliest standard Babylonian manuscripts of *Anzû* are known from the Middle Assyrian period, and one Middle Babylonian tablet may be a copy of an Old Babylonian version, so the poem was certainly current by the time *Enūma eliš* was written. The story was widely known and became the paradigm of heroism in Mesopotamian culture (Annus, 2001: xxi). Not to have dealt with Ninurta's battle against Anzû in *Enūma eliš* would have been to ignore a significant rival, a serious gap in the argument, as it were.

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[13] This was not the only occasion when a statue of Marduk was stolen and returned: Dalley argues that this occurred four times before the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I, and that the frequency of the theft (and indeed, the number of statues, since there was more than one) undermines it as a criterion for a specific date of composition (Dalley, 1997). Yet if *Enūma eliš* does not date specifically to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, it probably dates somewhere near it. The astrological terminology of the poem coincides well with that of *Enūma Anu Enlil,* developed in the Kassite period (Cooley, 2013: 159), which provides a *terminus post quem*.

[14] On the reading of the name see Borger (2008: 272-3).

Enūma eliš therefore uses a competitive strategy of allusion in portraying Marduk as better than Ninurta. His battle is modelled on Ninurta's battle against Anzû, but Marduk achieves his victory in his own way, out-doing him on several counts. For example, the crisis Marduk faces is far greater than that of Anzû. Rather than just kill one monster, Marduk has to kill a primeval creator backed by a whole army of monsters. As Machinist remarks, "the point of *Enūma eliš* is to show Marduk appropriating and surpassing his model" (2005: 45). References to Ninurta's task – heroic in its time – within a larger, more complex narrative elevates Marduk's own achievement: he is not only as good as Ninurta was, he is better. There are many such examples of one-upmanship in the poem.

Like *Enūma eliš*, *Anzû* relates the heroic victory that won its protagonist his high status. Anzû steals the tablet of destinies from Enlil, which deprives him of his supremacy. The whole divine order is thrown into chaos and the gods desperately seek a champion to fight Anzû and take back authority. Three gods are asked to fight but refuse. Ninurta is the only one who rises to the challenge. However, Anzû is a formidable opponent. Since he possesses the tablet of destinies, he can harness its magic power as a weapon. Ninurta shoots an arrow, but Anzû repels it by turning it back into the materials from which it was made. Through the advice of Ea, Ninurta tricks Anzû into uttering a spell that works against himself. Ninurta cuts off Anzû's wing, and Anzû calls ***ka-pa a-na ka-pa*** 'wing to wing!' (III.13) in an attempt to call it back to his body. However, the Akkadian word ***kappu*** can refer to an individual feather as well as the whole wing (CAD K: 186).[15] Thus Anzû inadvertently calls

[15] Particularly in medical texts where it is much more likely that one feather is used rather than the whole wing, e.g. ***ina kappi***(A$_2$) ***tu-šap-ra-šu-ma*** AMT 31, 6 line 9, cf. also Biggs Šaziga 54 i.3, cf. 55 ii.3 ***ka-pi-šu ta-ba$_2$-qa-an-šu$_2$***, 'you pluck its feathers'. AHW: 444 cites *Anzû* III.13 for 'Feder am Pfeil'.

the feathers of Ninurta's arrows to himself instead, and brings about his own demise.[16] Anzû's feathers float on the wind to Enlil's temple Ekur, announcing Ninurta's victory.

Enūma eliš shows numerous parallels of plot with *Anzû,* as has been noted (Lambert, 1986; Machinist, 2005: 39; Seri, 2014: 101). The chaos-monster Ti'āmtu arises as a threat to the divine order, established gods are approached and asked to fight her but refuse, the young god Marduk steps up when asked, his victory saves all the gods from disaster, and he is rewarded with kingship over them. They are narratives of order disturbed and re-established (Machinist, 2005: 39). At first glance this might seem like a traditional type of story that one might tell about any warrior god. There is an element of truth in this, as there are other narratives that follow a similar trajectory.[17] However, there are a number of more specific references to the poem of *Anzû* in *Enūma eliš* that argue for more than just

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[16] This interpretation, first put forward by Hirsch (apud Saggs, 1986: 22, in textual notes) and elaborated by Studevent-Hickman (2010), follows the text of the tablet GM 1 and the Assur manuscript LKA 1. The Sultantepe version has *kap*-[*pi*] *kap-pi i-šas-si,* 'He called "My wing, my wing!", which implies that Anzû is so shocked by what has happened that he forgets to use the tablet of destinies (Vogelzang, 1989: 71). Vogelzang interprets the Assur manuscript in a similar way, suggesting that Anzû is distracted by the need to recover his wings and therefore cannot deflect Ninurta's next attack (1989: 71). Cf. the interpretation of Reiner (1985: 64-5), that while intending to recover his severed wings, Anzû inadvertently utters the call of an ordinary bird instead - *kappī* is a bird call attested in a scholarly list (edition Lambert, 1970). Thus after crying "my wing", Anzû loses the ability to formulate human words and can only sound the chirps of birds. This is perhaps more likely to be a secondary development rather than inherent in the *Anzû* poem itself, as the list is much later (Neo-Assyrian).

[17] E.g. *Labbu,* KAR 6, *Girra and Elamatum*.

coincidence, and strongly suggest that *Enūma eliš* is pointing us back to *Anzû* and deliberately inviting comparison.

Some examples follow. *Enūma eliš* ends with a list of Marduk's titles, just as Anzû ends with a list of Ninurta's, but while Ninurta is honoured with around 18 names,[18] Marduk receives 51, implying his greater worthiness. Ninurta's epithets are used of Marduk: he is called ***mutīr gimillu abīšu***, "avenger of his father" nine times in various forms (*Enūma eliš* II.127, 156, III.10, 58, 116, 138, IV.13, VI.105, 163).[19] Marduk is called ***gašru***, "mighty" in II.127 (cf. *Anzû* I.2, I.4, and I.14) and ***ḫa-ʾi-iš tuq-ma-te***, "hastener to battle" in II.128, two phrases in close proximity that together echo the *Anzû* prologue: at I.14 Ninurta is called ***ga-aš$_2$-ra ha-a-a-ša$_2$***[20] ***mut-tab-bi-la qab-la a-nun-te***, "mighty hastener, who always carries the battle (and) combat". Hallo and Moran remark upon the similarity of *Enūma eliš* II.128 to this line (1979: 92). As they note, ***ḫayyāšu*** is extremely rare, like much of the diction in the prologue, and in

[18] The tablet becomes fragmentary at the end and many of the lines describing the names are broken, making it difficult to say exactly how many there were. The list probably does not extend beyond the known text, since III.157 declares ***pal-ḫu*** ***šu-tu-ru ina ilānī***(DINGIR)^{meš} ***šumī***(MU)^{meš}***-ka ma-a'-diš***, 'greatly revered (and) supreme among the gods are your names!' with a tone of finality.

[19] For the Ninurta epithet see Lambert, 1986: 59; Lambert, 1971: 337 citing the prayer SBH 12 = Cohen, 1988: 479-99, and the ritual text KAR 307 = Livingstone, 1989: text 39. The epithet itself is not in *Anzû*, but Ninurta plays this very role in the poem, which centres on avenging the theft of the tablet of destinies from his father Enlil.

[20] ***ḫa'iš*** is a cognate from the same root as ***ḫayyāša***, so *Enūma eliš* adapts the word while referencing its source.

fact is only attested once[21] outside *Anzû* and *Enūma eliš* (Hallo & Moran, 1979: 74). Furthermore, Marduk uses Ninurta's weapons: a mace[22] and bow and arrow.[23] There is thus a general programme of Marduk absorbing Ninurta's characteristics along with his weapons and epithets. This programme is highlighted by the two prominent motifs of the tablet of destinies and blood on the wind, which specifically underline that Marduk not only matches Ninurta but out-does him.

Blood on the wind

While Marduk prepares for battle against Ti'āmtu, the gods urge:

a-lik-ma $\check{s}a_2$ *ti-amti nap-*$\check{s}a_2$*-tuš pu-ru-u'-ma*
ša-a-ru da-mi-$\check{s}a_2$ *a-na bu-us-ra-ti li-bil-lu-ni*

[21] In the *Marduk Prophecy*, line 1: [d]*ḫa-a-a-šum,* which appears to be the name of a little-known primeval deity (Borger, 1971: 5, 17).

[22] In *Lugal-e* Ninurta's mace Šar-ur plays a major role.

[23] Lambert notes that the name Anu gives Marduk's bow in VI.89 *i-ṣu a-rik,* "long wood" also is the literal translation of the name of Ninurta's spear ĝeš-gid$_2$-da in *Lugal-e* 78 and 259 and *An-gin*$_7$ 144 (1986: 59).

"Go and cut off the life of Ti'āmtu!

Let the winds carry her blood as good news." [24]

Enūma eliš IV.31-32[25]

Indeed, after Marduk slays Ti'āmtu, just as the gods had wished:

u_2-par-ri-i'-ma uš-la-at da-mi-ša

ša-a-ru il-ta-nu a-na bu-us-ra-ti uš-ta-bil

He cut open the arteries of her blood,

the north wind sent it as good news.[26] *Enūma eliš* IV.131-2

[24] It is not clear whether *bu-us-ra-ti* is singular or plural. CAD suggests that *busratu* is a biform of *bussurtu,* which would allow it to be singular here (B: 346). Worthington notes that the ms. which writes *bu-us-ra-tum* (ms. B) has a consistent habit of writing singular nouns and adjectives with stem-final t with the ending *-tum,* regardless of grammatical case, while writing feminine plurals in *-āti* or *-ēti* (2012: 280-1). This increases the evidence for taking it as singular. In *Anzû* there are, however, two plene writing of this word in ms. R in lines II.18 and II.136 (as opposed to four non-plene writings: in F, E, and R II.114, and in F II.18). There are no plene writings of the word in *Enūma eliš.* Whether the word is singular or plural does not make much difference for the meaning. For *bu-us-ra-ti* rather than *pu-uz-ra-ti* see Lambert (2013: 475).

[25] Edition Lambert (2013). All translations are by the present author.

[26] cf. Foster's interpretation of *uš-ta-bil* as a causative Š perfect: "He let the North Wind bear (it) away as glad tidings" (2005: 461). The Š-stem could also be interpreted as "He made the North Wind bear (it) away".

Both of these couplets originally occur in *Anzû.* The first appears when Ninurta's mother is urging him to go into battle, saying:

šu-ri-iḫ[27] *nap-šat-su an-za-a ku-mu-ma*

ša₂-a-ru kap-pi-šu ana bu-us-ra-a-ti lib-lu-u-ni

"Destroy his life, bind Anzû!

Let the winds carry his feathers[28] as good news."

SB *Anzû* II.17-18[29]

The same lines appear twice more when Ea is encouraging Ninurta to return to battle, relayed in a message via Šar-ur (II.114-15 = II.137-8). As in *Enūma eliš,* after Ninurta has won his victory:

a-na it-ti ša₂ bu-us-ra-ti-šu₂

kap-pi an-zi-i u₂-bil ša₂-a-ru

[27] Var. g: *su-ri-iḫ* (II.113 and 136), also with the meaning "destroy" (D imperative *sarāḫu* rather than Š imperative *arāḫu* II).

[28] Var. R II.136: *ka-pa-šu₂,* "feather".

[29] Edition Annus (2001). All translations by the present author.

As a sign of his good news

the wind carried Anzû's feathers

SB *Anzû* III.21-22

It is not only the feathers/blood on the wind motif that recurs but also the exhortation preceding it. *Enūma eliš* thus invokes not just one line but the whole couplet in the same context as it appeared in *Anzû.* The last line is close to a direct quotation,[30] and the previous line carries the same sentiment, only in different words. There is no doubt that this is a reference to *Anzû*.[31]

The re-use of these lines is a direct invitation to compare Marduk and Ninurta. Therefore it is also important to notice the differences. Ninurta receives many more lines of encouragement – 27 from his mother and 23 from Ea – but Marduk receives only these two. The implication is that he does not need any more than this simple instruction. In fact it is preceded by a long passage of praise and bestowing of honours instead (IV.3-30). The long exhortations of *Anzû* are here replaced by only two lines evoking them. Marduk is thus presented as a more capable warrior than Ninurta. Marduk lacks no confidence in his own ability and needs no cajoling into action – he is willing to act swiftly when called upon.

The substitution of blood for feathers is widely believed to be a clumsy adaptation. Feathers, the argument goes, are easily carried on the wind, whereas blood is not (Lambert, 1986: 59). However, this is an unnecessary criticism. Since Ti'āmtu does not have feathers, some kind of substitution would have been required to make the allusion coherent (Seri,

[30] For a similar adaptation of a line from *Atrahasīs* (SB II.71, *Enūma eliš* IV.7) see Seri (2014: 98-9).

[31] Cf. Halton (2009: 53 ff.) on allusions which use different vocabulary.

2014: 99). The wind can carry drops of rain, so for it to carry drops of blood is perfectly plausible. In any case, we are in a mythological world where anything is possible. Marduk is a storm god,[32] hence has control over the winds. He uses them as weapons in battle, directing them into Ti'āmtu's belly: she swallows them, and is incapacitated, which gives Marduk his chance to shoot her with an arrow (IV.96-99). Therefore Marduk can make the winds do whatever he wants – they are no longer ordinary natural phenomena subject to what we consider logically possible.[33] We do not ask whether it is plausible for Ti'āmtu to be incapacitated by swallowing the wind, or even whether it is plausible that she could swallow it at all, rather we accept this as belonging to the logic of the story. Lambert, who first noticed the substitution of blood for feathers, said that the version in *Anzû* is "more convincing" (1986: 59), but this need not be interpreted as a value judgement – merely an observation about the sequence of the borrowing.

Rather than being awkward or badly integrated, then, the image of blood on the wind fits perfectly well into the world of *Enūma eliš*. The reference to *Anzû* adds meaning to Marduk's victory, since it comes at the climax of a battle in which he has demonstrated his superior ability: unlike Ninurta, Marduk does not need the help of Ea or anyone else, but is self-sufficient. He encounters no setbacks, but his victory is swift and decisive.

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[32] He rides the storm chariot in *Enūma eliš* IV.50 and is assimilated with Addu in VII.119-21.

[33] Before sending him into battle, the gods test Marduk's powers by asking him to create a constellation and then destroy it (IV.25-26) – the fact that he can do this shows the extent of his power to make the universe follow his commands.

The tablet of destinies

The tablet of destinies is central to the plot of *Anzû,* since the poem is about its theft and recovery. It causes a crisis of power among the gods, and Anzû's possession of the tablet is the reason why he is such a dangerous threat, both to the established order and as an opponent in battle. In *Enūma eliš,* however, the tablet of destinies is not nearly so important and it is less clear to us how its appearances are connected. Ti'āmtu fastens the tablet of destinies to Qingu's chest when she appoints him as head of her army (I.157), which Lambert criticised as illogical– where did she get it from, why is this not explained (1986: 58)? Marduk later declares that Qingu had no right to it (IV.81-2, 121), takes it from him and fastens it to his own chest (IV.122) but then later gives it away to Anu (V.69-70). These details are often thought to be inconsistent and hence show up the clumsy dependence of *Enūma eliš* on Anzû. Lambert's view is that the tablet was important in *Anzû,* and since it provides the basic structure of both plot and ideology in *Enūma eliš,* the tablet had to be worked into *Enūma eliš*, even if it did not fit very well (1986: 58).

Such an assessment is limited, however, as it deflects attention away from the ways in which the tablet is significant in *Enūma eliš.* A comparison of the ways the tablet has been deployed in the two poems can tell us much more about *Enūma eliš* than simply that it was dependent on Ninurta mythology. Furthermore, inconsistency may not be such a sign of lack of sophistication as is sometimes supposed. Scholarship on Homer can provide some useful parallels: whereas certain lines and episodes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were once considered in a negative light, as inconsistencies betraying the sources of the poems (see Kakridis, 1949: 7-10), these same inconsistencies are now regarded as more active signposts of Homer's own aims and aesthetic. A more nuanced appreciation of the poetics at work has

shown these episodes to be skilful, a clever way of playing with the existing tradition and the expectations that the audience would have had (see Currie, 2006).

In advocating a more a nuanced understanding of Homeric poetics, Kakridis argues against the idea that logical contradictions show a lack of poetic skill: "It is of no importance whatever if a scene is natural or unnatural...nor if a scene contradicts an earlier or later scene in the poem. What is important is that the constituents of the scene fulfil its poetic purpose" (1949: 8). He reminds us, too, that "when a poet plans a scene for a certain aesthetic purpose he will contrive to serve this purpose by means of the details" (1949: 8). That is, when something seems contradictory to us, we must not be too quick to assume that the "contradiction" is not in fact consistent with the overall design of the poem. Are these inconsistencies really inconsistent, or have we not yet understood them?

Thus the development of readings in Homeric scholarship over the last century may provide us with some useful parallels for our understanding of the composite nature of *Enūma eliš*. There may be other ways of viewing these details which make more sense than we have realised, or we may be applying the wrong criteria for consistency, expecting the logic of the real world to apply to stories set in a mythological realm. As regards the tablet of destinies, we shall see that the way it is used in *Enūma eliš* is at least coherent with the way that the poem positions itself in relation to *Anzû*, as one of many in the web of allusions.

Qingu's possession of the tablet is an immediate reminder of *Anzû*.[34] It creates the expectation that Qingu will be a formidable enemy to defeat, since three opponents refused to fight Anzû before Ninurta agreed, and even Ninurta's first attempt failed, requiring the advice of Ea to succeed. However, this expectation will be overturned: Qingu turns out to be

[34] Katz notes that Qingu is the true equivalent of Anzû, rather than Ti'āmtu (2011: 131).

quite easy to defeat, as Marduk crushes his skull and dispatches him in a single line (IV.119). Furthermore, even the terrifying Ti'āmtu is not as great a difficulty for warrior Marduk as Anzû was for Ninurta. There is no failed first attempt and the duel is swiftly won (Vanstiphout, 1992: 43-4 n.23). This is not to say that Ti'āmtu and Qingu are not as great a *threat* as Anzû – there is still the motif of two gods too terrified to fight them before Marduk volunteers. Rather, the ease with which Marduk conquers these enemies is contrasted with the difficulty of the challenge for Ninurta. Marduk is simply more powerful.

The tablet of destinies does not have the same magical power here as it does in *Anzû*, because it has a very different function: rather than being an object that directly confers power, it is a more abstract symbol of legitimacy. Qingu has no right to it because he has no right to divine kingship. Contrast this with Marduk who is almost "elected" leader by the other gods, their decision ratified by assembly. Marduk has another claim to legitimacy in that he is the son of Ea, king of the Apsu - Marduk is the true king, while Qingu is a false pretender (Sonik, 2008: 741-42).

A non-poetic source describing the tablet of destinies, a draft inscription of Sennacherib K 6177 + 8869 (published by George, 1986), makes clear in the opening lines what its significance is: *ri-kis* ^{d}*en-lil*$_2$-*u*$_2$-[*ti*], "the bond of Enlilship" (line 1), which equals lordship over the gods of sky and earth, *be-lu-ut ilānī*(DINGIR)^{meš} *ša*$_2$ *šamê*(AN-*e*) *u*$_3$ *er-ṣe*-[*ti*] (line 2) and kingship over the Igigi and Anunnaki (*šarrūt*(LUGAL)-*u*$_2$-*ut* ^{d}*i*$_2$-*gi*$_3$-*gi*$_3$ *u*$_3$ ^{d}*a-nun*-[*na-ki*], line 3). Aššur's possession of the tablet in this text is, then, proof of his position as ruler over all the other gods. The tablet is therefore more likely to be an emblem of authority than a magical object that confers it (cf. George, 1986: 139).

I suggest that the de-emphasis of the tablet of destinies in *Enūma eliš* is another way of emphasising Marduk's innate powers, showing that he does not need magical objects to

succeed, while his opponents do. Marduk does not need the tablet of destinies either, for he is powerful enough already, so much so that it is of no consequence for him to give it away to Anu in V.69-70.[35] The comparison with Enlil in *Anzû* is especially pertinent, for when the tablet is stolen from Enlil, he loses all his power. In contrast, Marduk's power does not depend on the tablet at all. Since Marduk is also taking over from Enlil as supreme ruler in *Enūma eliš*, this speaks volumes about their relative abilities. The tablet of destinies is de-emphasized in *Enūma eliš* precisely in order to show how irrelevant it is to Marduk in contrast to those who came before him, and can be seen as yet another slight against Enlil.[36]

The tablet of destinies is not even necessary for decreeing destinies, for *Enūma eliš* frequently describes all the great gods as having this ability. Ea calls Anšar ***mu-šim-mu ši-im-ti***, "who decrees destiny" at II.61 and 63, which is echoed by Marduk's demands at the end of the tablet when he asks Anšar, ***ep-šu$_2$ pi-ia ki-ma ka-tu-nu-ma ši-ma-ta lu-šim-ma***, "(May) my spoken word be like yours, may I decree destiny" (II.160). But Anšar and Marduk are not the only ones to enjoy this power, rather, all the great gods do. They are given the same epithet as Anšar at III.129: ***ilānū***(DINGIR.DINGIR) ***rabûtu***(GAL.GAL) ***ka-li-šu$_2$-nu mu-ši-mu*** [***šīmāti***(NAM)^{meš}],

[35] This interpretation can complement Lambert's suggestion that this was an aetiology for how Anu came to be the traditional possessor of the tablet at the time *Enūma eliš* was composed (1986: 58). Anu holds the tablet as a symbol of power, but *Enūma eliš* portrays it as a less meaningful one, giving Anu only nominal authority while demonstrating that Marduk is the one really in control. Sonik sees the gesture as a mark of tact, that Marduk honours his predecessor and allows Anu to remain nominal head of the pantheon although he becomes the one to actively lead it (2012: 392-3). Gabriel sees it as an expression of Marduk's power, sealing the tablet as a guarantee of his own authority (2014: 264).

[36] For Marduk's usurping of Enlil see Lambert (1984: 5) and Seri (2006: 517).

"All the great gods who decree [destinies]", and it is these gods as a collective whom Anšar orders to decree Marduk's destiny as their leader: *ši-mat-ku-nu ar₂-ḫiš ši-ma-šu₂,* "quickly decree your destiny for him" (III.65 = III.123). None of these gods need to possess the *ṭuppi šīmāti* in order to decree destinies. This is also the case outside of *Enūma eliš*, for example, the great gods as a collective are called *ilānū*(DINGIR)^{meš} *rabûtu*(GAL)^{meš} *bēlū*(EN)^{meš} *ši-ma-a-ti* in an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar (VAB 4: 150, A iii 6). Other individual gods are said to possess this power, for example Ea is *be-el šīmāti*(NAM)$^{[meš]}$ in *Maqlu* VI.60 and *šar₃ šīmāti*(NAM)^{meš} in DT 1 (Lambert, 1960: 112, 2); Šamaš is *bēl*(EN) *ši-mat māti*(KUR) (Mayer,1976: 506, 113); Mammītu is creator of fate(s) in *Gilgameš* X.320, as is Nintu in *Atraḫasīs* III vi 47.

The decreeing of destinies then, both in *Enūma eliš* and in the tradition outside it, is an attribute of a class of powerful gods and is not dependent on possessing the tablet of destinies, which is rather a symbol of the very highest authority. However, Qingu is precisely *not* one of these high-ranking gods. It is possible therefore that the reason he needs the tablet in *Enūma eliš* is because he cannot decree destinies without it, or do very much else. When *Enūma eliš* opens, Marduk is not one of these gods either, hence he needs to ask for the power to decree destinies. The assembly of gods are still able to decree Marduk's destiny in IV.1-18, however, without the tablet in their possession, for presumably Qingu must have it (Lambert, 2013: 451). The difference in status is also marked by the differing ways that the gods address each other in tablet II: Ea addresses Anšar in hymnic form, with four lines of repeating parallelism common of hymnic beginnings (II.61-4). Anšar then addresses Ea in the same way (II.139-42). However, when Ea then speaks to Marduk he does not use this form of address (II.131 ff.). When the assembly of gods bestows supreme power on Marduk, they *do* use this parallelism (IV.3-6), marking his ascent to a new rank.

The fact that Qingu needs the tablet of destinies in order to achieve this level of power, whereas the supernal gods (including Marduk) do not, is actually a sign of his weakness. It is significant that possession of the tablet is of no help to Qingu whatsoever in battle either: unlike Anzû he is unable to use it against his opponent, who quickly deprives him of it without a fight. Unlike Anzû, Qingu is not the main opponent, merely Tiʾāmtu's commander-in-chief. That he is the one to wield the tablet of destinies and not Tiʾāmtu is another instance of its downgrading – it is not held by the main enemy in *Enūma eliš,* but by a secondary, weaker opponent. In any case, Qingu's decreeing of destinies in I.161-2 is completely ineffectual and neither of his pronouncements come to pass: Tiʾāmtu's spoken word does not quench fire, nor does the venom of her monsters weaken Marduk's strength (Gabriel, 2014: 265).

Attempts have been made to explain how Tiʾāmtu got hold of the tablet of destinies in the first place. Annus suggests that Ea may have taken the tablet from Apsû after killing him, but that it "returned" to Tiʾāmtu in the same way that it returned to the Apsû in *Ninurta and the Turtle* (2002: 149). The tablet would naturally reside in the Apsû since this location is traditionally the source of wisdom; Tiʾāmtu would then have inherited it from her late husband (2002: 149-50). Sonik suggests that Apsû and Tiʾāmtu held it jointly as joint custodians of the watery realm, and so Tiʾāmtu is the legitimate owner of the tablet at the beginning of the poem (2012: 389-90). These interpretations are based on the appearance of the tablet in the text *The Twenty-One Poultices* (edition Lambert, 1980) where it is the property of Ea, guaranteeing his supremacy in the Apsû. There it is called ***mal-ṭar*** ^{d}***a-nu-ti-ia,*** "document of my Anuship" (line 6), and the apkallû of Eridu bring it to Ea in the Apsû, suggesting this was its original home. The tablet is also associated with the Apsû in *Ninurta*

and the Turtle. However, if it were the case that the tablet originally and legitimately belonged to Ti'āmtu, she should surely be free to give it to Qingu if she wished.

However, it may well be irrelevant how Ti'āmtu got hold of the tablet of destinies – it has been downgraded so much that its irrelevance is precisely the point.[37] Perhaps we are supposed to be surprised at its sudden appearance and the lack of attention given to it, for it is precisely this that emphasizes how far in significance it has fallen.

The poem may be silent on this point simply because it is not important to the story being told, and in fact would introduce all sorts of distractions and complications. To try to explain it would put undue emphasis on an object that was only ever peripheral to the plot. At the beginning of *Enūma eliš* the tablet of destinies does not seem to have a designated legitimate owner as it does in *Anzû,* and it adds to Marduk's power if he is the first legitimate holder and then gives it away.

Silence on a particular point can also be a form of allusion – something that Classicists call "making reference by refusing reference" (Dowden, 1996: 55; Currie, 2006: 7). Refusal to acknowledge something that seems to demand to be addressed renders it conspicuous by its absence. It is a way of differentiating the values and aesthetic of the poem from those that preceded it.

In Homer as here, to go into explanations might tie the poem up too much with a previous tradition that the poet is trying to break away from. For example, Homer never explains Agamemnon's comment that Calchas has a habit of making evil prophecies at *Iliad* I.106. The reference is to the prophecy that led to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, but to go into this would also involve supernatural events that are deliberately excluded from the *Iliad,* which

[37] Cf. Lambert (2013: 451) "one is left with the feeling that the author did not take it too seriously".

prefers to portray a more realistic world (Dowden, 1996: 55, with further examples). Similarly any explanation about how Tiʾāmtu got the tablet of destinies would tangle the poem up in side tracks which conflict with the story *Enūma eliš* is trying to tell. And yet, knowledge of Anzû's theft of the tablet of destinies from Enlil helps us appreciate why the situation in *Enūma eliš* is so different. There it was the source of ultimate power, but in *Enūma eliš* it is almost as insignificant as Enlil. The point of the tablet of destinies may be that it is now an insignificant weapon against Marduk's awesome power[38] (and that Marduk's power supersedes that of its previous owner, Enlil), but the full understanding of why and how and what that means for the ideology of *Enūma eliš* is only possible once the reader makes the comparison between *Enūma eliš* and *Anzû* and makes these connections, as is the case for all allusions.[39]

The world of *Enūma eliš* has changed since the world of *Anzû,* and the power of Marduk is not limited by any magical object, but is above everything. Vanstiphout argues that when Marduk is appointed supreme god he is placed above all other elements in the universe, including the tablet of destinies (1992: 54-55). This is why Qingu is unable to turn the tablet to his advantage, as Marduk "is mightier than the tablet of destinies, since his victory over Tiʾāmtu and her host is not dependent on this" (Vanstiphout, 1992: 55). Marduk's power over the constellations also places him higher than any other destiny-ordaining authority, since the movements of the stars communicate the fates that have been

[38] Cf. Gabriel (2014: 265): when Marduk seals the tablet he reduces its function to an archival one and it does not give him any extra power.

[39] Cf. Machinist (2005: 44) on the deliberately partial explanation of circumstances behind the creation of man in *Enūma eliš* as a strategy to force the reader to compare the situation with that in *Atraḫasīs.*

fixed by the gods, messages that communicate divine will to mankind. Control of the stars is a display of, therefore, the ultimate control over destinies (Vanstiphout, 1992: 55).

This also makes a point about Marduk and Ninurta – Ninurta subverts the power of the tablet to achieve his victory, but Marduk does not need to. His power is not dependent on it, while Qingu's "authority" is entirely reliant on it. For Ninurta the tablet was an obstacle – for Marduk it is irrelevant. When he takes it from Qingu, seals it and affixes it to his own chest, the action is symbolic of his ultimate power over all destinies. That he gives it away to Anu is not an inconsistency, rather, it is an expression of this supremacy, that he does not need such an object in order to have the powers that he does. Further, through this action, Anu becomes subordinate to Marduk.[40] It also evokes comparison with Ninurta, who returned the tablet to Enlil after his battle with Anzû, yet Anu is not implied to be the original owner, but the recipient of Marduk's generosity (Sonik, 2012: 393).

The lack of significance of the *ṭuppi šīmāti* in *Enūma eliš* can also be read as yet another slight against Enlil, whose authority was thrown into chaos by the theft of the tablet. This is an example of what I call "reverse intertextuality", when an allusion in one text engages with an earlier text in such a way that changes the way the earlier text is interpreted: text B projects itself back into text A to influence how we read it. In this case, the story of *Anzû* and its premise now seem petty in comparison to the grand crisis and powers on display in *Enūma eliš*: Enlil's power cannot be all that great or secure if it can so easily be overturned. The relegation of the tablet to a less important position – necessary to Qingu, but not to any of the gods who matter – is also a relegation of Enlil, placing him among this lower order of

[40] Cf. Sonik (2012: 392), who agrees that Marduk no longer needs the tablet at this point, though she differs on its importance beforehand.

gods with inferior powers. Vanstiphout suggests that the older traditions present in *Enūma eliš*, such as the tablet of destinies that was once an object of great power and significance, "remain incorporated as incomplete foreshadowings of the eternal truth and order" (1992: 56). One could also view it as a reminder of the limitations and shortcomings of previous gods of the old order, in contrast to the might of Marduk, whose rise to power is unfolding before us now.

Erra and Išum

Tracing the motifs further into *Erra and Išum,* an even more complex picture emerges. *Erra and Išum* is a poem about the destruction of Babylon: Erra, god of war and plague, devastates Babylonia by bringing about civil war and enemy invasion. His vizier Išum intercedes on behalf of the people, cataloguing the immense destruction in lengthy speeches, and finally persuades Erra to desist. The poem ends with Erra returning to his dwelling and decreeing that Babylonia shall be restored, with Marduk nowhere to be seen.

This composition is notoriously difficult to date. The earliest manuscripts are Neo-Assyrian, but the poem itself is likely to be older: two manuscripts state in their colophons that they have been written and checked according to originals from Babylon (Hunger, 1968: 84: 252; 121: 413). Estimates have been made ranging from the eleventh century to the seventh century BC based on various events that may have provided a historical background.[41] The early first millennium saw numerous upheavals in Babylonia and there is

[41] Although some have dated it to the Neo-Assyrian period (Gössmann, 1955: 89; Franke, 2014), the poem was alluded to in a description of Sennacherib's campaign against Babylon (Weissert, 1997: 196;

little to privilege any one interpretation over another. However, the search for an exact historical parallel to the situation described in the poem may in fact be unnecessary: the poem may just as well express sorrow over the repeated destruction of the region in the early first millennium as refer to one specific occasion (Cagni, 1977: 71).

While *Enūma eliš* is geared towards demonstrating Marduk's supremacy, *Erra and Išum* undermines it. Furthermore, this undermining is accomplished with the very same tactics that *Enūma eliš* had itself used in undercutting Marduk's rivals to demote Marduk. *Erra and Išum* alludes to *Enūma eliš* at the very moments where Erra destroys the cosmic order that Marduk had created, and emphasises Erra supplanting Marduk as ruler of Babylon (Machinist, 2005: 47-8). Frahm has also noted this aspect of *Erra* as a 'counter-text' to *Enūma eliš,* reversing its themes and thereby undermining its authority (Frahm, 2010, 2011: 347-9). Whereas *Enūma eliš* establishes order, *Erra and Išum* undoes order and descends into chaos.

The reversal is neatly illustrated by two allusions to the blood on the wind of *Enūma eliš.* The first comes in Išum's lament for Erra's destruction, which contains the lines:

Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 306-21), which provides a *terminus ante quem.* Lambert favours the ninth century when Nabû-apla-iddin restored the damage done by a Sutean invasion that occurred around 1100-1050 BC (1958: 397-400). Von Soden proposes that the unrest in Uruk refers to the same events that the Nabonidus stele (VAB 4.274-6) ascribes to the reign of Erība-Marduk in the late eighth century (1971: 255). Beaulieu refines this to the mid eighth century, based on a reference to the abduction of the statue of Ištar from Uruk, an event that took place during the reign of Nabû-šumu-iškun (2001).

damē(UŠ$_2$)^{meš}-*šu$_2$-nu ki-ma mê*(A)^{meš} *ra-a-ṭi tu-ša$_2$-aṣ-bi-ta ri-bit āli*(URU)

ʿ*u$_3$*ʾ-*mun-na-šu$_2$-nu tap-te-e-ma tu-ša$_2$-bil$_2$ nāra*(ID$_2$)

"You made the city squares take their blood like drain water,

You opened their arteries and made the river carry their blood away."

Erra and Išum IV.34-5

In Enūma eliš, it was the blood of a defeated monster that was carried away as a sign of victory, but here it is the blood of the people of Babylon. This underscores the misdirection and perversity of Erra's violence – for him, victory is slaughter of the native population. They may not be entirely innocent,[42] but certainly are not a threat to the cosmic order like Ti'āmtu. This time, the blood is not carried on the wind, up in the air, but on the ground as if in the drains, perhaps a sign of how low Išum considers Erra's actions to be. The allusion might also be considered to be a correction of the blood on the wind motif, putting the blood at ground level where it more naturally runs.[43] This edits out the supernatural aspects of Marduk's victory and emphasises the stark reality of the situation facing the Babylonians now.

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[42] The Babylonians may be at fault for neglecting Marduk's cult statue, as Erra's rhetorical question at I.127-8 may imply (Cagni, 1969: 35). However, it is not simply a case of Marduk neglecting his people in return, since he left only for a temporary period of refurbishment and specifically expresses concern over what will happen when he leaves (I.170-78). The fact that Marduk was tricked into leaving also implies some lack of culpability on the part of the Babylonians (Bottéro, 1985: 264).

[43] Such corrective references are often found in Greek Alexandrian poetry and Latin poetry influenced by it. For discussion see Thomas (1986: 185-9), building on Giangrande (1967).

Either way, Erra's victory is a perverse one, and does not bring about a new world order as Marduk's does, but causes its very collapse. The lengthy laments over the destruction wreaked in this poem speak as a condemnation of such violence (Foster, 2007: 67), and emphasise the suffering of its victims (George, 2013: 56). The once-powerful Marduk is now helpless and unable to protect his city from the devastation that Erra wreaks. A complex network of allusions throughout the poem depict Marduk as old and ineffectual, and eventually replaced by Erra as the god with authority over Babylon (Machinist, 2005: 48-49). Marduk's lament in IV.40-44 is a densely allusive passage, echoing both *Anzû* and Marduk's victory as portrayed in *Enūma eliš,* a second reference to the blood on the wind:

u'$_3$-a bābilu(TIN.TIR)^{ki} *ša$_2$ ki-ma* ^{giš}*gišimmari*(GIŠIMMAR) *qim-ma-tu$_2$ u$_2$-ša$_2$-aš$_2$-ri-ḫu-u$_2$-ma ub-bi-lu-šu$_2$ ša$_2$-a-*[*ru*]

u'$_3$-a bābilu(TIN.TIR)^{ki} *ša$_2$ ki-ma* ^{giš}*terinni*(ŠE.U$_3$.SUH$_5$) *še-im u$_2$-ma-al-lu-šu$_2$-ma la aš$_2$-bu-u$_2$ la-lu-šu$_2$*

⌜*u'$_3$-a*⌝ *bābilu*(TIN.TIR)^{ki} *ša$_2$ ki-ma* ^{na4}*kunukki*(KIŠIB) *el-me-šu$_2$ ad-du-šu$_2$ ina ti-ik-ki* ^{d}*a-nim*

[*u'$_3$-a*] ⌜*bābili*(TIN.TIR)⌝^{ki} *ša$_2$ ki-ma ṭuppi šīmāti*(DUB NAM.MEŠ) *ina qātī*(ŠU^{II})*-ia$_2$ aṣ-ba-tu-šu$_2$-ma la u$_2$-maš-ša$_2$-ru-šu$_2$ ana mam-ma*

"Ah, Babylon, whose top I made as splendid as a date palm, but the wind has dried it up / carried it away!

Ah, Babylon, which I filled with seed like a (date)-cone, but I could not have enough of its delights!

Ah, Babylon, which I hung on the neck of Anu like an amber seal!

[Ah, Babylon], which I gripped in my hands like the tablet of destinies,

releasing it to no one!" *Erra* IV.40-44

The image of the palm tree is complex and multi-layered. First of all, date palms are symbols of abundance and prosperity in Mesopotamia generally,[44] so the metaphor of Babylon as a destroyed date palm concisely expresses the total ruin of the city. Secondly, the palm tree was known for its ability to withstand the wind. *Maqlû* refers to it as ^{giš}*gišimmaru*(GIŠIMMAR) *lip-šur-an-ni ma-ḫi-rat ka-lu-u$_2$ ša-a-ri,* "date palm that faces all the winds, release me!" at I.22 (edition Abusch, 2015). In the ritual SpTU 248, a woman is exhorted to embrace a palm tree while saying, ^{giš}*gišimmaru*(GIŠIMMAR) *ma-ḫi-rat kal ša-a-ri* "date palm that faces all the winds" (von Weiher, 1998: 58 line 33). The date palm is invoked in rituals for its ability to remove evil, perhaps by analogy with this property of catching the wind in its branches (Couto-Ferreira, 2013: 111), and yet it too withers in the face of Erra's onslaught. This, then, makes a point about the force of Erra's rampage – since the palm is known for its sturdiness in the wind, the "wind" that has destroyed the palm's crown here must have been vicious indeed.

On top of these associations are the intertextual ones, as an allusion is implied in line 40. The crucial word is ***ubbilūšu,*** which could be translated in two different ways. It is usually understood as a D preterite 3rd singular of *abālu* 'to dry up', plus a subordinating *-u*. However, it could also be a non-standard spelling of *wabālu* 'to carry away' in the G preterite 3rd plural with two bs instead of one (normally *ubilū*), which would result in 'but the wind

[44] E.g. the *Babylonian Theodicy* calls the date palm 'tree of wealth' *gi-šim-ma-ru iṣ-ṣi meš-re-e* in line 56 (edition Oshima, 2013), and *Ur$_5$-ra Ḫubullu* gives 'tree of riches' as a synonym at III.273-74: giš-nig$_2$-tuk and giš.mu.nig$_2$.tuk are equated with *gi-šim-ma-ru*.

has carried it away'.[45] If the verb is *abālu* then its form is extremely similar to *ubilūšu* from *wabālu* – only one extra 'b' is a very small difference in both writing and pronunciation. The line would then read 'but the winds have dried it up!' but would also carry the double entendre of 'but the winds have carried it away!'

Whether direct or implied, this image of the palm fronds carried away on the wind is strongly reminiscent of the feathers carried on the wind in *Anzû* and the blood carried on the wind in *Enūma eliš.* In those compositions, this was a sign of defeat of the enemy, a way of announcing triumph in battle. Here too the wind carries away leaves as a sign of defeat. However, the perspective has changed – instead of a defeat which is cause for celebration, it is cause for despair. Marduk is unable to save his own city from Erra's destruction: he has already lost the battle without even engaging in it. The allusion to his former victory is bitterly pertinent.

The image builds on a chain of symbols of conquest: blood on the wind symbolised Marduk's takeover from Ninurta, while the leaves on the wind now symbolise Erra's takeover from Marduk. The destruction of Babylon is Marduk's defeat and Erra's victory. This may even be an allusion to the way that *Enūma eliš* alludes to *Anzû*. In *Erra and Išum*, the same image has been transformed to produce a similar meaning as in *Enūma eliš.* However, now it is deeply ironic, as it reverses the image of Marduk as all-powerful conqueror that the allusion originally created in *Enūma eliš*. It seems, then, that there may be an awareness in the late Babylonian poetic tradition of the allusive techniques in use in earlier poems, as they are directly exploited to create new meaning.

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[45] The same spelling is attested in the Antiochus cylinder: *a-na na-de-e uš-šu ša* E$_2$.SAG.IL$_2$ *u$_3$* E$_2$.ZI.DA *ub-bi-il* 'for laying the foundations of Esagil and Ezida I brought (the bricks)' (edition Stevens, 2014: 68, i.12-13) and will be discussed further in my forthcoming book.

The tablet of destinies also features in Marduk's lament in IV.44, as the climax of the passage. This time the allusion is to Anzû, where the tablet of destinies has a crucial role. There, the evil Anzû bird snatched the tablet away from the chief god Enlil, thus depriving him of his supreme powers. Here, Marduk laments that he gave away his power unwittingly as he watches his precious city being destroyed, no longer his. It is as if Erra, like Anzû, has snatched it away. Now Erra has also taken Babylon from Marduk – even at the end of the poem it is Erra who decrees its restoration, not the city's chief god (Machinist, 2005: 48).

As well as taking the city, Erra has also taken the range of powers the tablet of destinies symbolises. By equating Babylon with the implicitly lost tablet, Marduk puts himself in the position of Enlil – a previously all-powerful god who is no longer in control. There is a further irony here: Marduk had displaced Enlil as supreme god in *Enūma eliš,* but now he is being displaced himself in an image which refers to the downfall of his predecessor. Nor is this the only resemblance between Erra and Anzû - both are supposed to be performing guard duty for the chief deity, both challenge his authority and disrupt his cosmic order by taking a key possession, and both then become the source of a chaos which must be neutralised (Machinist, 2005: 46). Hence the two figures are equated both structurally in their roles and in the details of this particular image. The allusion acts on two levels at once, linking Erra with a well-established force of chaos in Babylonian literary tradition, and equating Marduk with Enlil as a former head of the pantheon who is now powerless and irrelevant.

We have seen how in *Enūma eliš* Marduk did not in fact cling on to the tablet and release it to no one, but freely gave it away to Anu. The poem of *Erra and Išum* has demonstrated that Marduk's abilities were not, in the end, as impressive as *Enūma eliš* had

claimed them to be. Here we may have another example of reverse intertextuality, projecting a judgement of Marduk back into his own poem. Perhaps he ought not to have been so overconfident, and should have held on to the tablet of destinies after all.

Conclusions

I have examined the ways in which two motifs from *Anzû* have been woven into *Enūma eliš* and *Erra and Išum* in ways that are coherent and highly charged with meaning. In *Enūma eliš*, both the blood on the wind and the tablet of destinies have been integrated in very competitive ways that show Marduk to be better than the gods who are the protagonists of *Anzû*: Marduk's qualities far out-do those of Ninurta the warrior or Enlil the head of the pantheon as he replaces both of them in his new role. This is not simply a process of copying and pasting, rather, the re-use of the motifs and adapting them to the new context is highly creative, and should be seen as sophisticated literary allusion. These allusions stand out and demand our attention for good reason: if Marduk's superiority to previous heroes went unnoticed, he would seem far less impressive or deserving of the high position which *Enūma eliš* bestows upon him.

The blood on the wind allusion announcing Marduk's superiority over Ninurta is subverted by *Erra and Išum* twice. This symbol of Marduk's victory is transformed directly into blood in the river and implicitly into palm fronds on the wind, both symbolising his defeat. This second allusion could also be to the original feathers on the wind in *Anzû* itself, but the fact that it is Marduk uttering these words inevitably recalls the situation in *Enūma eliš*. Just as Marduk once replaced Ninurta, Marduk is now himself replaced by Erra, further underlined by the blood of the Babylonians running in the city streets as an announcement

of Erra's victory. It is striking that such a similar image should be used to make what is essentially the same point in both poems, even more so that *Erra and Išum* accomplishes it with such an ironic twist. This may point to an awareness in this later poem of how allusive techniques were operating in *Enūma eliš,* since they are co-opted for similar polemical ends. *Erra and Išum* appropriates the way that *Enūma eliš* itself deployed this allusion to *Anzû*, alluding to an allusion, as it were, interacting with the literary tradition in a complex and layered fashion.

The tablet of destinies was side-lined in *Enūma eliš* as unrelated to Marduk's supreme power, but in *Erra and Išum* it is given importance once again. Marduk compares his lost city of Babylon to the tablet of destinies that he once held so tightly, but now has been snatched away. Like Enlil in *Anzû*, he has been deprived of his power by a force of chaos which now reigns instead of him. Referring back to *Anzû* for the allusion here also projects meaning onto the way *Enūma eliš* uses the image of the tablet of destinies: Marduk may have been cavalier with his supremacy, but he is not as capable as once was thought.

These motifs are just two examples of many allusions serving the ideologies of these poems. Strategies elevating Marduk over Ninurta are constantly at work in *Enūma eliš*, while allusions undermining this elevation occur throughout *Erra and Išum.* Nor is this allusion to an allusion an isolated case. Other such complex chains may be found in connection with the transference of weapons from hero to monster, the equalling of their attributes, and the murder of Apsû.[46] All three of these poems are deeply intertextual: unpacking and interpreting these allusions enables us to appreciate just how sophisticated they truly are.

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[46] These examples will be discussed in my forthcoming book on intertextuality in *Anzû, Enūma eliš,* and *Erra and Išum*, along with elaborations of many of the points referred to in this article.

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